

Congress to act at times of great national calamity.” Almost a century later, the American Red Cross continues to serve our Nation and the world, providing compassionate assistance to people suffering in the aftermath of personal, local, national, or international disasters.

As one of our country’s premier humanitarian organizations, the Red Cross provides disaster relief to millions of people both at home and abroad. In the past year alone, the American Red Cross rose to meet many challenges—from Hurricane Floyd on the eastern seaboard to the Kosovo relief effort to the terrible earthquakes and floods that struck countries around the globe. Following the tragic shootings at Columbine High School and in other schools and places of work and worship, the American Red Cross sent in crisis counselors to support grieving families and friends of the victims. In Taiwan and in Turkey, the American Red Cross worked with other Red Cross affiliates to provide solace and support to earthquake survivors; after the crash of EgyptAir Flight 990, Red Cross grief counselors brought comfort to victims’ families. In total, the American Red Cross responded to nearly 64,000 disaster incidents last year alone and helped provide information to thousands of families separated from loved ones by war or disaster.

The services that the American Red Cross provides go beyond disaster relief. Its biomedical services program provides patients in more than 3,000 hospitals nationwide with the latest in high-quality, state-of-the-art blood and tissue services. Last year it provided more than 700,000 emergency and personal services for military personnel and their families, including relaying messages from their families to the three American servicemen held captive by Yugoslav forces. And in communities across the Nation, more than 12 million people received Red Cross instruction in lifesaving techniques last year, ranging from first aid and CPR to water safety and boat handling.

Forming the backbone of the American Red Cross is a vast network of nearly 4.5 million blood donors and 1.3 million dedicated volunteers who ensure that help will be there when and where it is needed. Virtually every

community in the United States is served by an American Red Cross chapter, Blood Services region, or both; and as we have seen demonstrated so dramatically over time, no community is immune to the sudden and devastating disasters that require the services and stewardship of the American Red Cross. Each of us owes a lasting debt of gratitude to this extraordinary organization that has given so much to our people, our country, and our world.

**Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton,** President of the United States of America and Honorary Chairman of the American Red Cross, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim March 2000 as American Red Cross Month. I urge all the people of the United States to demonstrate support for their local Red Cross chapters and to become actively involved in furthering the humanitarian mission of the American Red Cross.

**In Witness Whereof,** I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-ninth day of February, in the year of our Lord two thousand, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.

**William J. Clinton**

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NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on March 3.

## **Letter to Congressional Leaders on Social Security Reform Legislation**

*February 29, 2000*

*Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. Leader:)*

I am pleased that Congress is moving forward with a bill that eliminates the retirement earnings test above the normal retirement age. As I said in my 1999 State of the Union Address, “we should eliminate the limits on what seniors on Social Security can earn.” The retirement earnings test was created during the Great Depression to encourage older workers to retire in order to open up more jobs for younger workers. As the baby boomers begin to retire, it is more important than ever that older Americans who

are willing and able to work, should not have their Social Security benefits deferred when they do.

We should reward every American who wants to and can stay active and productive. I encourage Congress to send me a clean, straightforward bill to eliminate the retirement earnings test above the normal retirement age.

Eliminating the retirement earnings test above the normal retirement age is a first step toward Social Security reform. I remain committed to making bipartisan progress on Social Security this year. I ask Congress to pass legislation that would extend the solvency of Social Security to about 2050 while taking significant actions to reduce poverty among elderly women. Last year I transmitted legislation to Congress that would have used the interest savings earned by paying down the debt to make Social Security stronger. If we agree to this simple step, we can extend the life of Social Security to the middle of the next century while also modernizing Social Security to reduce poverty among elderly women.

Moving forward on these two, simple steps would be a substantial downpayment on Social Security reform. It would demonstrate that we can work together, building the bipartisan trust necessary to finish the job of meeting the long-term Social Security challenge.

Sincerely,

**William J. Clinton**

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives; Richard A. Gephardt, House minority leader; Trent Lott, Senate majority leader; and Thomas A. Daschle, Senate minority leader. An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter.

### **Remarks at a Reception for Congressional Candidate Elaine Bloom in Miami, Florida**

*February 29, 2000*

Thank you. Well, I was looking out at the beautiful vista—first, I was looking down on you. Did you see me up there? And I was looking at this magnificent home and think-

ing how fortunate we are, all of us, to be in this country at this moment, to be free citizens, to be able to come here to support someone in whom we believe.

I want to begin by thanking Phil and Pat Frost. They have been with me a long time, too, and I am honored to be here in their magnificent home. I want to thank all of you who helped to spearhead this immensely successful event for Elaine tonight. I want to say that I'm glad that her children, David and Anne, are here, and I'm sorry the judge couldn't come. But far be it for us to get him in trouble. We want him to stay on the bench and make good decisions. *[Laughter]*

I want to say how grateful I am for the friendship and support I have enjoyed from Congressman Peter Deutsch and his wife, Lori, who is here. And I thank them so much for their service to the United States. And Representative Sally Heyman, we're glad you're here.

And I want to say a special word of thanks to my longtime personal friend Bill Nelson. I am thrilled that he is running for the Senate and thrilled he is doing so well.

I want you to know why I'm here tonight, besides the fact that I've been dying to see Phil and Pat's house. I'm here for three reasons. One is, Elaine was there for me when only my mother thought I could be elected. *[Laughter]* And she reminded me tonight that when we first met, she said, "Now, look, I'm going to ask you some questions, but I want you to know in advance I'm going to be for you anyway, so you don't have to tailor your answers, just shoot me straight." And we've been shooting each other straight now for, well, more than 8 years.

I'll never forget when the first significant victory I won was in the Florida Democratic Convention when they had this straw poll. And Elaine and some of my other supporters hauled Hillary and me from meeting to meeting to meeting. I thought New Hampshire was tough till I met these people in all these little caucuses, you know. I had to answer 400 questions. When I got through with that caucus, I said, "I hope we did well, but I'm so tired, I don't care whether we win or not anymore." *[Laughter]* It was an amazing experience. And we had a lot of opponents, a lot of good people running for